

EMPATHY ROADBLOCKS

Adapted from “Empathy Blockers” in *Healthy Relationships 101* by Michael Jaszcz

At the end of a long school day, your child says, **“I had a rough day.”** Some common parenting adult responses said with the best of intentions can unknowingly cause distance and disconnect. We have suggestions for better ways to listen, communicate with empathy, and continue the conversation.

AVOID THIS

One-Up

“You think your day was rough? Let me tell you about mine!”

Advise or “Fix”

“Maybe if you get off your phone at night and get more sleep...”

Educate

“You know I was listening to this audiobook...”

Interrogate

“Was it because of your test? Did you get in trouble?”

Discount or Shut Down

“Do you know how privileged you are to get an education in the first place?”

TRY THIS

Let them be heard.

“I hear you...” “Tell me more...” or just, “Wow.”
“I don’t know what to say right now, but I’m grateful you told me.”

Validate their feelings.

“It’s not easy this year, especially with all the new restrictions.”

Ask them.

“How can I be helpful?”
“Do you want advice, or do you just want to vent?”

Follow their lead.

They might not want to talk, and that’s okay!
“We don’t have to talk about it right now if you don’t want to.”

TEENS TELL US

“We want to be heard before we’re helped.”

“We don’t share our problems with our parents because they try to fix it and often make it worse.”

“Think comforting, not counseling!”

“When my parents listen to me, it makes me want to listen to them.”

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